



Interventional Pain Management Medical Group

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Ms. Kimberly Topper
Center for Drug Evaluation
and Research
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Kimberly:

This letter is to clarify my feelings on the use of opioids for nonmalignant pain. I am a pain management physician practicing in San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria, California.

I have many patients with the combination of no susceptible and/or neuropathic pain syndromes, who mostly have a benign source of their pain. I tend to utilize opioids in combination with other adjuvant medications to provide relief from suffering as well as enhance comfort and ability to participate in rehabilitation activities and exercise. I feel that these medications can be used safely when prescribed by a responsible physician who has performed a complete physical examination and taken a complete medical history.

The data has not shown that opiate medications lead to addiction and drug-seeking type behavior in the vast majority of patients, and I feel that the organized media have much to answer for as they have done a great disservice to the majority of patients receiving opiate medications for medically indicated use. They have exaggerated the extent of abuse of these medications and have dramatized and sensationalized the exploits of a few bad actors.

I urge the F.D.A. to continue to monitor the use of these medications, however, not to take any action that may undo the great progress made in the acknowledgement of pain as a source of human suffering and economic liability for our country.

Please call me with any questions at (805) 544-7246.

Sincerely yours,

Russ Levitan, M.D.

RL/fb

D: 8/14/01 T: 8/16/01